

Bible Study

Christian Beliefs

Ephesians 4 v. 1 - 16



Introduction

In our Bible Studies we will be using a booklet from 'A Life Builder Bible Study' series. Our overall theme for these studies is: CHRISTIAN BELIEFS. The studies were originally written by Stephen Eyre, but we will be modifying them in order that they become more usable for both home study and Church study.

These studies give us the opportunity to study the Bible in a greater depth and to reflect on what it is saying to us.

If you are unable to be with us in church and have decided that you will be doing the studies from home, it is suggested that you do the study on a Wednesday morning, for an hour, starting at 10.30am. Get yourself a tea or coffee, a Bible, pen and paper (for any notes you want to make) and begin studying.

We do hope that you enjoy the studies that have been produced!

Context

Knowing what we believe is foundational to a healthy relationship with God and others. These studies on Christian Beliefs explore what Christians need to understand about some vital topics:

God, Christ, The Holy Spirit, God's Word, human nature, salvation, the church and the 'last things'.

Having a good grasp of these beliefs will equip us to make sense of the world we live in, strengthen our assurance of our own identity in Christ and direct us to a life of integrity.

Some Thoughts To Help You While You Study

The purpose of the study is:

To encourage community, spiritual leadership and servanthood within the church.

The Lord provides resources for the church. A set of beliefs, his presence and gifted people are essential means by which the church lives.

Humility, meekness, gentleness and patience are not qualities known for helping one succeed in most pursuits of life. On the one hand, Christian community cannot work unless these qualities are present. Christian character is the foundation of healthy church life. The foundational reason Christians gather as a church is the common beliefs we have about God. If we don't share common beliefs, then division must follow. If we forget our foundational beliefs and we allow ourselves to be taken up with secondary matters, division is sure to follow.

Although unity in the church is a gift of the Holy Spirit, that unity must be treasured and cultivated by our intentional response. Carelessness and neglect destroy the unity the Spirit provides.

We come to know God and receive the fullness of his blessings by means of his gifts and gifted people. We need to pay attention to this because we can easily think that a new program or a better building is all that we need.

Christian Ministers are often viewed as professional Christians hired to do the ministry of the church. Paul states that the primary function of such people is to equip **God's people** (the so – called laity) to do the ministry of the church. Unfortunately, many churches and professional

ministers have deviated from God's intention.

An immature church is blown about by a variety of doctrines. Mature believers know when it is best to 'take a stand' on certain issues and when it is better to disagree.

Current false winds of doctrine include a lack of concern for Christian doctrine, a low view of Scripture, a self – centred prosperity gospel that makes us blind to the Spirit, an inadequate concern with the gifts and the Holy Spirit (either too much emphasis or a complete disregard of the Spirit's ministry).

Speaking the truth without love may be destructive. It can be a means of power or control over people with whom we disagree. However, loving people without speaking the truth may allow friends we care for to continue in error, which can also be destructive.

A Space For Notes:

Study 11 – The Community Of The Church

The Church is made up of all who call on the name of the Lord. We are one in Jesus Christ. We share a common – unity community. But the practice of Christian community is difficult. The writer of the studies, Stephen Eyre, gives this example, he says: 'I went to a Christian college that broke off from a denomination in the 1960's, which broke off from another denomination in the 1950's, which broke away from another denomination in the 1930's, which was part of a denomination that split in the 1850's.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Why do you think there are so many divisions in the church? How does the existence of so many denominations affect your attitude toward the church? How do you contribute to the unity or disunity of your church?

Many things divide Christians from other Christians – gifts, doctrine, church government, mode of baptism and so on. Whether we like it or not, divisions have occurred, and we must live with them. But we can be inspired and guided by Scriptures to do better.

Read Ephesians 4 v. 1 – 16

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

Why are the qualities mentioned in **v. 1 – 3** essential for unity in the church?

Christian unity must be built on a foundation of shared beliefs and experiences. What shared beliefs and experiences does Paul mention

(Ephesians 4 v. 4 – 6)? How do these 'ones' provide the foundation for unity?

What steps might you take to strengthen your own relationships within your church or fellowship?

Triumphant conquerors often gave gifts to their citizens. What '**gifts**' did Christ give the church when he ascended to heaven (**v. 7 – 11**)?

What is the overall purpose of the gifts mentioned here?

One purpose of gifted church leaders is to equip or prepare God's people for service, that is, ministry (**Ephesians 4 v. 12**). How does that compare with the way we often think about Christian ministers?

The Greek word translated '**prepare**' or '**equip**' (**4 v. 12**) means to mend a net or set a broken bone. How does preparing/equipping enlarge your understanding of the way Christians are to live and work together?

In what areas do you feel prepared for service within your church or Christian community?

What dangers threaten an immature church (Ephesians 4 v. 14 – 16)?

The Christian church in every generation must confront false 'winds of teaching'. What false teachings are we facing in our generation?

For the church to mature in Christ, members must '**speak the truth in love**'. What can happen when truth is not spoken in love? What happens when love is spoken without truth?

Paul uses the image of the body to describe the way the church should work together. What part of the body are you? How can you do your part to build up the body in truth and love?

Summarize your understanding of essential elements of the church contained in this study and study 10.

Something to Do Now

Ask God to show you your place in the community and mission of the church.

Something to Do Later

The church can be described as a fellowship of the saved. Based on our previous studies concerning sanctification, the church could also be described as the fellowship of those who are being saved.

Make a list of the ways in which the church has been used by God to shape your character and aid your growth in salvation.

Read the following passages for further study and reflection on the nature and purpose of the church:

Matthew 16 v. 13 – 28

Acts 2 v. 42 – 47

1 Corinthians 6 v. 1 – 13; 12 v. 12 – 26

Philippians 4 v. 1 – 9

Now use the opportunity to Pray